CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE MURDER in the WOOD.

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THE

MURDER, &c.

AS Mr. Wainman was riding through a retired part of the country, a deep groan reached his ear. He ſtopped his horſe, and finding the ſound to proceed from a thicket at a little diſtance, alighted, and ran forward in hopes of being able to aſſiſt a fellow-creature in diſtreſs. As he thought it poſſible that ſome perſon might be attacked by robbers in that lonely ſpot, he drew out his piſtol, which though at that time unloaded, might help to frighten away a rogue, if he ſhould chance to meet with one.

He had not proceeded far directed by the ſound of the groans, when he perceived a man weltring in his blood. He ſprang forward, and found that he was ſtabbed in ſeveral places, and that his throat was cut in a moſt ſhocking manner almoſt from ear

to ear. On Mr. Wainman's approach the poor man ceaſed groaning, and looked at him with an air of ſatisfaction. He endeavoured to ſpeak but was unable, but Mr. Wainman by putting different queſtions, made out that he lived at the next town, and that he wiſhed him to take particular care of his watch and pocket book. Mr. Wainman put them into his pocket, and then endeavoured to raiſe the poor man and to examine his wounds. All his care, however, was to no purpoſe, for within a few minutes he expired in his arms. Mr. Wainman was greatly ſhocked, but finding he could be of no further ſervice to the unhappy ſufferer, he left him, determined to ſeek for his friends, and give them all the comfort in his power to beſtow. As he paſſed through the wood, he found on the ground a large caſe knife, which being covered with blood, made him naturally ſuppoſe that that was the inſtrument, with which the horrid murder had been committed. As he thought it might lead to a diſcovery of the criminal he put it into his pocket, and mounting his horſe, gallopped with great ſpeed towards the town. His mind was ſo full of the ſcene he had left, and the deſire of ſoon acquainting the friends of the deceaſed with what had paſſed, that he was inconſiderately attempting to ride through the turnpike without paying, till his horſe was ſtopped by the man at the gate, who poſitively refuſed to let him proceed, till he had given a good account of himſelf.

Mr. Wainman little conſidered that his diſturbed countenance, the haſte with which he was travelling, and above all his hands and cloaths being ſpotted

with blood, were circumſtances that might make him very properly ſuſpected of miſchief. He was vexed at being ſo detained, and for ſome time refuſed to anſwer, what ſeemed to him to be only impertinent curioſity. While they were debating, two gentleman rode up, and ſaid that a horrid murder had been committed in Parker's wood. "If that is the caſe," ſaid Peter, the man at the gate, "I am confident this gentleman here is the villain. I always think ill of thoſe who are for cheating the tolls; but you may know from his clothes that this man is a murderer. Why look ye he is all covered with blood." This ſpeech directed the attention of the two gentlemen to Wainman, who both agreed with Peter that he muſt be the murderer, and undertook to conduct him ſafe to the neareſt magiſtrate. "With all my heart gentlemen," ſaid Wainman with warmth, "I will go with you before any magiſtrate in the kingdom, and may I periſh as a malefactor if I do not prove my innocence as clear as the day."

When they arrived before the juſtice of the peace, the gentlemen related in what condition they had found the dead body, and how they found Wainman at the turnpike gate. The magiſtrate ordered him to be ſearched, and found upon him the watch and pocket-book belonging to the dead, and the bloody knife he had picked up in the wood. "Strong evidences theſe Sir againſt you," ſaid the juſtice ſpeaking to Wainman, "I ſhould like to know how you would clear yourſelf of the crime you are charged with."

People ſhould be very careful not to condemn

others

others too haſtily, for appearing confuſed when charged with any great crime. However innocent Mr. Wainman was of the murder in queſtion, it is certain that when ſuſpected by three men, dragged diſgracefully before a magiſtrate, and then when the things found upon him ſeemed to confirm his guilt, he felt a little of that ſhame and confuſion, that might make by-ſtanders ſuppoſe he knew himſelf to be juſtly accuſed. Recollecting himſelf however, he anſwered the queſtions put to him, by giving a ſhort and true account of every circumſtance that had happened. Mr. Wilſon, which was the juſtice's name, pauſed. "Sir," ſaid he, "I like your manner. You ſpeak like a man of honor, and as if you were telling the truth. But there are many parts of your ſtory ſo very unlikely to happen, that I ſhould be wanting in my duty as a magiſtrate, if I was not to commit you for further trial. Then, if you are innocent you will be acquitted, if you are guilty, remember by deceit you only encreaſe your crimes."

Mr. Wainman was of a gentle diſpoſition, and had great command of temper, but the circumſtances of this day had greatly agitated him; and now when he found himſelf on the point of being committed to priſon, charged with a crime ſo heinous, as he would have ſhuddered but to think of, he loſt his natural compoſure. He called heaven and earth to witneſs his innocence, and loudly complained againſt the injuſtice of his accuſers and of the magiſtrate himſelf. The juſtice interfered, and by ſpeaking kindly to Mr. Wainman, in a few minutes perſuaded him to ſubmit to the decree of the law.

Mr.

Mr. Wainman had lain in jail about three months, when the Aſſizes came on and he was called to take his trial. Beſides the two gentlemen who had taken him to the juſtice, there appeared another witneſs againſt him, who produced his piſtol. It may be remembered that he had taken it out of his pocket when he firſt went into the wood, but he dropped it whilſt aſſiſting the dying Mr. Brown, and accidentally left it behind him. The piſtol it was before remarked was not loaded. Tom Simms, an honeſt labouring man, who had picked it up, and now produced it, ſwore that he heard one fired as he was felling timber at ſome diſtance; and Joſeph Smart, gun-maker, whoſe name was on the piſtol, as poſitively ſwore that he had ſold it to the priſoner not many weeks before. Mr. Wainman had many witneſſes for the goodneſs of his general character, but he had no evidence in this particular caſe, except his own ſimple unſupported ſtory. The judge when ſumming up the evidence remarked, that although great weight muſt be allowed to a man's having always maintained a good character, yet that circumſtance alone muſt not outweigh ſtrong circumſtantial evidence. "In the preſent caſe," ſaid he, "the account of the priſoner is poſſible, but it is not a probable one. That the perſon whoever he was that murdered Mr. Brown, ſhould have left him without taking either his watch or pocket book; that Mr. Brown himſelf ſhould afterwards have given them to Wainman's care; that Wainman ſhould have taken up this other perſon's knife, and have left his own piſtol behind him; that he ſhould without thinking of it

attempt

attempt to ride hard through the turnpike, and when ſpoke to ſhould be violently agitated as it ſeems he was, for a while refuſing to account for his behavior, are ſuch unlikely things, that it requires ſtrong evidence to have them credited."

The jury retired for a ſhort time and brought in the verdict guilty. The judge ſentenced him to death the following Monday, and he was conducted back to priſon.

Some of his friends who had been often with him ſince the firſt of his confinement, were now very deſirous not to loſe any more of his company; but he begged to be left alone for that day, and promiſed to ſee them the next morning, which was Sunday, as early as they could get admitted. He received them with great compoſure. "Excuſe me my friends," ſaid he, "for not ſeeing you yeſterday. On firſt hearing my ſentence, my mind was not enough diſpoſed to forgive thoſe, by whom I was unjuſtly condemned, and I was ſenſible that your friendly ſorrow, would too much ſtrengthen my reſentment. I have been praying for a forgiving temper, and I thank God my prayers are heard." As he ſaid this the door opened, and juſtice Wilſon entered. "Do you ſtill perſiſt Mr. Wainman," ſaid he, "to ſay that you are innocent? Conſider your ſtate. To-morrow before this time, you will be launched into eternity." "Juſtice Wilſon," ſaid Mr. Wainman, "I thank you for your viſit. I have long wiſhed to ſee you, that I might have an opportunity to aſk your pardon, for my violent behavior, the day you committed me to priſon. I know you only did your duty, and I wiſhed for an opportunity to tell you

ſo

ſo before I ſuffer, that if my name ſhould hereafter happen to be cleared, you might not fancy I reproached you." "You will have it then," ſaid the juſtice, "that you are innocent."

"The Being," replied Wainman, "with whom it is of moſt conſequence to me to ſtand well, knows that I am."

"It is a ſtrange caſe," ſaid Mr. Wilſon, "and I like not the part I have acted. I fear I have brought on the death of an innocent man." "By it perhaps," returned Wainman, "a guilty man may be ſaved. By my ſuffering he may live to repent, and perhaps he is not at preſent fit to die." "My friends," continued he ſpeaking to them all, "Did not the ever bleſſed Son of God, come down from heaven and from glory, on purpoſe to die for ſinners; and ſhall not I cheerfully ſubmit to ſuffer, if it may be a means of ſaving a ſoul from hell?" "You are a worthy man," ſaid the juſtice, "and I grieve that you muſt come to ſo ſad an end." "You are miſtaken," anſwered the priſoner. "I fear no end. My ſoul will never die. You ſeem Sir, aſtoniſhed at my fortitude, but do you not know the power of religion? I thank my God it has always been my endeavour to ſerve him, and I truſt in my Redeemer to forgive my ſins. Of what then ſhall I be afraid? Even at this aweful moment when I ſtand on the brink of eternity, at this moment, from which my ſoul has ſhrunk back with horror I feel ſupported by a power ſuperior to myſelf. I feel to be raiſed above my misfortunes and above the world."

In this manner Mr. Wainman converſed the greateſt

greateſt part of the day, all he ſaid being full of reſignation and holy confidence. On one perſon preſent ſpeaking of the ſhame of a public execution, he ſighed and ſaid, " It is only by the grace of God, that I can hope to go through it as I ought to do. But if diſgrace is ſo hard to bear, how muſt thoſe feel, who at the day of judgment are expoſed before men and angels, before God and his Son? If pain is hard to be ſubmitted to, who can dwell with everlaſting burnings? If the parting from friends affect us, how ſhall we like to be ſeparated for ever, from all we love and all we honor?"

We have ſeen Mr. Wainman in priſon, on his trial, and on the point of being brought to the gallows, nobly ſupported by the power of religion, and the ſenſe of his innocency. We have ſeen him calmly preparing to meet his end, excuſing thoſe perſons who had been the cauſe of bringing him to the ſcaffold, and even rejoicing in the thoughts of death, in the hopes of its being the means of ſaving the ſoul of a fellow creature. Let us now turn to Samuel Thompſon, the real murderer of Mr. Brown. He was the ſon of an honeſt ſhop-keeper, and might have done very well, if he had not taken to gaming and other bad courſes. On his father's death he carried on the buſineſs, and as he minded the ſhop, and kept himſelf ſober till evening, his conduct was not much complained of, though every body knew he was a wild youth. As ſoon as he had ſhut up ſhop, he would go to the alehouſe, and ſpend his money in drink, and playing at domino; but he always took care to leave a little in the till, that things might not appear to go bad with him. One

evening

evening when Thompſon was with a large party at the King's Head, he heard Mr. Brown's footman tell Jonathan the bell-man, that his maſter would walk over the next day to Brownlow, a place about five miles off, to receive a power of money in caſh and bank notes, that a relation had juſt died and left him. Thompſon took no notice of this at the time, but all night long he could not ſleep for thinking of 'Squire Brown's legacy. He forgot that the tenth commandment ſays, "Thou ſhalt not covet," and he lay wiſhing and wiſhing, that ſome good friend would die and leave him ſome money. At laſt he fell aſleep and began dreaming about his money. He thought that ſomebody ran away with his till, and that he never could find out who it was, to bring him to juſtice. Says Thompſon to himſelf when he awoke, "this is a lucky omen. It means that I may get 'Squire Brown's money, without ever being detected. I won't go like other ſilly fools, and be taken up for paſſing the notes. No, I'll have nothing to do with them. Nor yet with his watch. I have one of my own and don't want it. I'll be contented ſo that I can but get at his purſe, and that I dare ſay will be richly loaded. You ſee how breaking one command leads to breaking others. Thompſon now reſolved to tranſgreſs the eighth, which ſays, "Thou ſhalt not ſteal." In the morning he took a piſtol, and a large knife with him. Not that he intended to commit murder, but he thought he muſt frighten Mr. Brown, and after all ſaid he, it is but being prepared, for I am not obliged to make uſe of them. He took his ſtand in Parker's wood, in a very private place through

which

which he knew Mr. Brown muſt paſs. He waited an hour, and as he had wiſhed ſaw him come alone. He let him paſs and then fired after him, and called upon him to ſtop. Mr. Brown turned round on hearing the noiſe of the piſtol, and at that inſtant Thompſon ſeized him, and with many curſes demanded his purſe. Mr. Brown attempted to defend himſelf, but as Thompſon was a younger, and a ſtronger man, he threw him down and forced it from him. He had contrived ſo to muffle up and and diſguiſe his face, that he thought it impoſſible he ſhould be known, and he was making off very well pleaſed with his ſucceſs, when he bethought himſelf that Mr. Brown might probably recollect his voice, and that idea frightened him ſo much, that he inſtantly turned about, and coming up to Mr. Brown ſtabbed him in the back. Again did Mr. Brown fall to the ground. The cruel Thompſon cut his throat as before deſcribed, and then wounded him in other parts of his body. Thus did he break the ſixth command, which ſays, "Thou ſhalt not kill." He then left him in great haſte, to provide for his own ſafety, and in his flight he threw away the bloody knife, that proved the innocent cauſe of Mr. Wainman's being condemned. He walked on without ſtopping for ſeveral miles, but then finding that no one purſued him, he ſat down to reſt a little. He now took out the purſe of money he had ſo wickedly obtained, and found in it about eighty guineas. Theſe he put into his pocket, for they could not be known, as all guineas are alike, but as the purſe might poſſibly be remembered, he threw it, (together with one of his

poor

poor father's old wigs, that he had put on as a diſguiſe, and the pair of gloves in which he had done the bloody deed) into a running ſtream, and they never were heard of more.

Thompſon wandered about in the wood all day, for he felt aſhamed of going through the village, or being ſeen by any one. As it happened he did not meet a ſingle creature, but he ſtarted every wind that blew, for fear it ſhould be ſomebody coming after him; and again and again did he wiſh, that he could reſtore poor Mr. Brown to his life and his purſe. When he ſaw the ſheep grazing in the meadows he wiſhed he was one of them; he curſed the day he was born, and in the anguiſh of his mind was almoſt ready to deſtroy himſelf. When night came on he ſtole through the village, and crept like a thief into his own houſe. The firſt news that he heard on his arrival at home, was that a perſon had been taken up for the murder of Mr. Brown. This was a great relief to his mind, but he affected to be ſadly ſhocked. He was going to exclaim againſt the wickedneſs of murder, but his conſcience roſe and he could not ſpeak it. He now became very anxious for Mr. Wainman's execution. He trembled leſt on the day of trial, ſomething ſhould come out that might endanger himſelf, and he hoped that when once he was hung, the matter would die away and be no more thought of. In this manner paſſed the three months that Mr. Wainman was in priſon. In company he tried to be jolly, was more frequent at the King's Head than ever, ſtaked with the deepeſt players, drank with the moſt beaſtly, and ſung with the loudeſt. But

when

when he was at home in his bed the caſe was very different. The deſpiſed, the condemned Wainman, ſlept peaceful in his cell. The unſuſpected Thompſon, was unable to cloſe his eyes. On the leaſt ſound he thought the officers of juſtice were at his doors; the groans of the dying Mr. Brown were always in his ears; and though he waſhed his hands a thouſand times, he fancied ſome ſpeck of blood might yet remain, to render him ſuſpected. He was tired with watching, and yet feared to ſleep, leſt he ſhould betray himſelf in his dreams. Whenever quite fatigued he fell aſleep, he would ſuddenly awake in dreadful horrors, for there is no peaceful ſlumber for the wicked. It ſo happened that on the trial of Mr. Wainman, Mr. Thompſon was appointed one of the jury. By the oath that he was obliged to take on being choſen, he broke the third command, which ſays, "Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," and by the falſe verdict that he gave againſt Mr. Wainman, the ninth, in which we are forbidden to "bear falſe witneſs againſt our neighbour."

The day after Mr. Wainman's trial, the ſame Sunday that he ſpent in comforting his friends, Mr. Thompſon went to church in the town where the aſſizes were held. As they were not yet over, the clergyman thought he could not do better than preach about the duty of witneſſes to keep ſtrictly to the truth. "Do you think," ſaid he, "that the only harm is in being found out? O fools! not to believe, that God at all times ſees, and keeps a ſtrict account of every action. Though you may have concealed your crime from every man's knowledge,

and

and may be certain you ſhall never be ſuſpected, conſider that God knows it, that he is angry with you, and will ſeverely puniſh you. If you are the means of having a man hung who is innocent, you will bear the blame, you will be his murderer, and remember that all murderers ſhall be tormented in hell fire."

Thompſon was much affected with this ſermon. He had hoped that when once Wainman was out of the way, he ſhould have been quite cheerful and eaſy; but he now began to conſider that he ſhould only have added another murder to the one he had already committed, and have made himſelf ſtill more wretched and miſerable. When the clergyman was ſpeaking of the wickedneſs of thoſe people who are the means of having others unjuſtly condemned, his mind was in ſuch an agony he could hardly bear it. He haſtily ran out of the church, and more from madneſs than from real conviction, threw himſelf at the feet of the keeper of the priſon, and confeſſed all his crimes. It muſt be ſuppoſed that the jailer was greatly ſurprized at his ſtory, but after having had him properly examined, he was committed for trial, whilſt the innocent Wainman inſtead of being executed, was reſtored to his family and friends.

Thompſon remained in priſon till the next aſſize, during which time Mr. Wainman frequently viſited him. He ſhewed him the nature of his crimes, till he led him to true repentance, and then he pointed out to him the hope of mercy through the death of Jeſus Chriſt. On the day on which he was to ſuffer, he was violently agitated, but amidſt his

his bittereſt anguiſh and remorſe, the idea that by voluntarily ſubmitting himſelf to juſtice, he had ſaved the innocent Wainman, was a greater comfort to his mind, than any he had enjoyed ſince he firſt committed the murder in the wood.

W.

THE END.